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NEWS RELEASE

Burnsville Man Sentenced in Large Marijuana Smuggling Ring

Dakota County Attorney James Backstrom announced that Jamie Eugene Bannochie Dalton, age 32 of Burnsville, was sentenced today by Judge Rex Stacey to 120 months in prison in connection with a major marijuana smuggling ring which transported large quantities of marijuana from Arizona to Minnesota. Dalton had earlier pled guilty to one count of Conspiracy to Commit Controlled Substance Crime in the First Degree. The 120-month sentence Dalton received was an upward departure from Minnesota Sentencing Guidelines. Backstrom said this upward departure was warranted given the large amount of marijuana involved. This was the largest seizure of marijuana ever documented in connection with a Dakota County prosecution (approximately 350 pounds with a street value in excess of \$700,000).

On April 4, 2007, the Dakota County Drug Task Force received information from the Navajo County Drug Task Force in Arizona that they had arrested a Minnesota resident, later identified as Timothy James O'Brien, age 57 of Rosemount, in the process of transporting approximately 350 pounds of marijuana to Minnesota. O'Brien agreed to cooperate with investigators and indicated that he was transporting the marijuana to Minnesota and identified Jamie Dalton as the person he was delivering the marijuana to. According to O'Brien he estimated that he had transported for Dalton between 100 to 150 pounds of marijuana from Arizona to Minnesota on three prior occasions, in October of 2005, March of 2006 and July of 2006. O'Brien told authorities he agreed to be the courier for transporting large quantities of marijuana from Arizona to Minnesota because his son owed Jamie Dalton "a considerable amount" of money for a past drug debt. O'Brien agreed to travel with Arizona law enforcement officers back to Minnesota and work with the Dakota County Drug Task Force in delivering the marijuana to Dalton.

On April 7th, O'Brien returned to his Rosemount residence and called Dalton telling him that he was back in Minnesota and needed help unloading the marijuana. Dalton arrived within an hour and, while under both pre arranged video surveillance, was observed by officers assisting O'Brien in unloading the marijuana from O'Brien's truck. Once unloaded, O'Brien cut open several of the bundles of marijuana to inspect the quality of the illegal drug. Dalton was arrested by Dakota County Drug Task Force agents as he left the Rosemount residence.

Backstrom said that in a pre-sentence investigation Dalton self-described himself as the "manager" or "money man" for this large illegal distribution ring which was involved in transporting over 700 pounds of marijuana from Arizona to Minnesota from 2005-2007.

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Backstrom commented: "The illegal production and distribution of marijuana is a significant problem in the Twin Cities. We are very pleased to have brought to justice one of the major distributors in this illegal drug trade."

Backstrom also noted the cooperative efforts between the Dakota County Drug Task Force and the Navajo County Drug Task Force. Without such cooperation and assistance Dakota County officers would not have been able to identify and break up this major drug ring.

[Photos of the marijuana bales seized are available to anyone interested, as is a surveillance video of Dalton unloading the bales immediately prior to his arrest.]

If you have questions, contact James Backstrom at 651-438-4516.